

Lesson Notes:

The Olivet Discourse - Matthew 24 & Luke 21

During the week of Passover Jesus and the disciples visited the temple mount just before his death on the cross. His disciples were amazed at the beauty and the splendor of the temple. As they were leaving the temple Jesus told them that in the future there shall not be one stone of the temple that would not be overturned. His disciples were amazed at this since each stone that Jesus was referring too weighed over 500 tons. In their amazement they asked Jesus three questions in Matthew 24:3. They were as follows:

When shall the temple be torn down?

What will be the sign of your return?

What will be the sign of the end of the age?

Below is a summary of Jesus response and what his responses mean to the believer:

Scriptural Principles

- 1) **Matthew 24:4-8** - Jesus tells his disciples that many false prophets shall come in his name and not to be deceived. He talks about wars, famines pestilences and earthquakes in diverse places. Then in verse 8 he likens his return and the end of the age to the birth pains that a woman goes through prior to the delivery of a child. He refers to these as the beginning of sorrows. These events have occurred throughout history therefore any generation reading these words could believe that they are the generation of his return.
- 2) **Matthew 24: 9-** In verses 9 – 13 he is talking to the nation of Israel. He indicates that many will hate them and shall kill them and they will be hated of all nations. We have seen this throughout history. Hitler murdered over 6 million Jewish people in his concentration camps. They are hated to this day by much of the Arab world.
- 3) **Luke 21:20-24 – Destruction of the Temple** - Luke provides an account where Jesus refers to Jerusalem being surrounded by armies and it being the “days of vengeance”. Jesus is referring to the destruction of the temple under the Roman General Titus. The Romans under Titus destroyed the temple and took 80,000 Jewish people as slaves. Many of them were sold as slaves to raise money to support the Roman Army.
- 4) **Matthew 24:14 – The End of the Age** - Here Jesus answers one of their questions. What would be the sign of the end of the age? Jesus tells them that when the gospel is preached as a witness to all nations the end would come. The disciples probably thought that he meant the world known to them which at that time was the nations surrounding the Mediterranean Sea and the Mid East.

Through satellite television we are seeing for the first time the fulfillment of this prophecy.

- 5) **Matthew 24:15-22 – Days preceding Jesus Return?** - Jesus refers to the Abomination of Desolation spoken of in **Daniel 9:27** as a key event in the history of Israel. He talks of the importance of fleeing Israel when this event occurs or is about to occur. Most Christians believe this scripture in Matthew is referring to 70 AD when the Romans destroyed the temple and took the Jewish people for slaves. Many fled to Petra in Jordan when the Roman Army was camped outside of Jerusalem awaiting word from the Roman Caesar Vespian to destroy the temple. However, it is also possible that he was referring to some time in the distant future since he says in **Matthew 24:21** that this will be a time of tribulation such as the Jewish people will never experience again. While the Roman destruction of the temple and subsequent enslavement by the Romans was certainly catastrophic it pales in comparison with Hitler's assault on the Jewish people when over 6 million were killed.

Jesus goes on to say in **Matthew 24:22** that except those days of tribulation be shortened that no flesh may be saved. It is believed in some Christian circles that when Jesus refers to "no flesh being saved" he is referring to all of humankind and not just the Jewish people.

- 6) **Matthew 24:23-31 – Jesus' Return** - In verse 27 Jesus indicates that his return shall be like lightening. In Matthew 24:30-31 Jesus indicates that his return will occur immediately after the tribulation of those days and that all on earth shall witness his return in the clouds coming in great glory.
- 7) **Matthew 24; 32-35 & Luke 21:29-33 – The parable of the fig tree.** - Jesus tells his disciples a parable. In the parable he says that when they witness all of the terrible events he referred to in Matthew 24:29 to be prepared for his return as it is at the door. There is some disagreement in regard to the generation that Jesus refers to in Matthew 24:34. Some say Jesus is speaking directly to his disciples and their generation. This is consistent with the timing of the destruction of the temple in 70AD as it was 37 years after the Olivet Discourse. Evangelicals believe that he was referring to the generation that sees Israel "blossom" as a nation again as it did in 1948.
- 8) **Matthew 24: 36-51** – Jesus completes his discourse by indicating in Matthew 24:39-42 that we will not know the hour when the Lord returns therefore we are to be faithful to his word and always be prepared.

The main theme of Jesus' Olivet Discourse is to be prepared for his return as we do not know the day or hour of his return. We prepare ourselves by recognizing ourselves as sinners and accepting Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross as payment for our sins. Then we follow up with love (worship) commitment (obedience) to his word and service (the great commission); the spreading of the holy gospel.

